

**Professional Counselor Legislation Section by Section Summary**  
**Senate Bill 18**

**Title:** An Act to revise certain provisions regarding professional counselors.

**Section 1:** Creates the definition section for professional counselors. The proposed definitions of terms are definitions in current law. (Current law)

**Section 2:** Sets out the composition of the Board by appointment by the Governor. Composition is set as nine members, with three members of the public, one counselor educator, and the remaining members as professional members. (Current law)

**Section 3:** Provides the terms for Board members and the compensation for Board members. (Current law)

**Section 4:** Provides the option for Governor to remove a Board member for cause and appoint replacements. (Current law)

**Section 5:** Provides that the Board will meet at least once per year and any other times set by a majority of the Board or the President and establishes the quorum for Board meetings and provides for the annual election of a Board president and vice president (Clarifies current law)

**Section 6:** Provides immunity for Board members and its agents for actions taken in the good faith discharge of Board duties. (Clarifies current law)

**Section 7:** Continues the Board under the Department of Social Services and requires the Board to report to the Department. (Current law)

**Section 8:** Requires all monies received by the Board be placed in the fund and drawn from the fund on approval of the Board. (Current law)

**Section 9:** Enumerates the powers and the duties of the Board. (Clarifies current law)

**Section 10:** Provides the Board with the authority to promulgate rules necessary to fulfill the Board's powers and duties. (Current law)

**Section 11:** Requires a license and renewal certificate issued by the Board to an LPC or LPC-MH be conspicuously displayed. (Current law)

**Section 12:** Makes it a Class 2 misdemeanor to practice counseling, as defined in the Act, without a license. (Current law)

**Section 13:** Prohibits a person not licensed as counselor from using certain titles. (Clarifies law)

**Section 14:** Makes fraudulent or misleading advertising of counseling a Class 1 misdemeanor. (Current law)

**Section 15:** Prohibits a licensee from performing counseling outside the licensee’s education, training and experience. (Clarifies current law)

**Section 16:** Provides the Board with the authority to employ or contract with people to assist in the enforcement of the Act and provides that prosecution of enforcement actions will be performed by the Attorney General’s Office or its designee. (Updates current law)

**Section 17:** Provides that the Board will provide information and evidence necessary to assist to prosecute a violation of the Act. (Updates current law)

**Section 18:** Maintains the requirements for licensure as an LPC as:

- (1) 48-hour doctorate or master’s degree in counseling from an approved program;
- (2) Passing of national examination prescribed by the Board;
- (3) Completion of 2,000 hours of supervised experience in counseling after completion of the required education degree;
- (4) No pending disciplinary actions or unresolved complaints;
- (5) Good moral character;
- (6) No violations of the statutes and rules of the Act.

The section further provides an option for the Board to consider a license application from an applicant with a felony or past counseling crime, the requirements for licensure notwithstanding, if the Board determines the crime was remote enough in time or of a nature that the public is not at risk. (Updates current law)

**Section 19:** Maintains the requirements for licensure as an LPC-MH as:

- (1) 48-hour doctorate or master’s degree in counseling from an approved program;
- (2) Licensure as an LPC under section 20;
- (3) Passing of national examinations prescribed by the Board;
- (4) Completion of 2,000 hours of supervised experience in counseling after completion of the required education degree;
- (5) No pending disciplinary actions or unresolved complaints;
- (6) Good moral character;
- (7) No violations of the statutes and rules of the Act.

The section further provides an option for the Board to consider a license application from an applicant with a felony or past counseling crime, the requirements for licensure notwithstanding, if the Board determines the crime was remote enough in time or of a nature that the public is not at risk. (Updates current law)

**Section 20:** Allows the Board to require an examination and proof of competence to practice counseling from an applicant if competency is questioned due to the mental or physical health of the applicant. The examination is conducted at the expense of the Board. (Current law)

**Section 21:** Clarifies the current licensure by endorsement process for a professional counselor licensed in another state to allow the Board to license the applicant, if:

- (1) Applicant is licensed in another state and has been under the jurisdiction of the other state for at least three years;
- (2) Applicant is in good standing with the licensing authority in the other state;

- (3) Applicant has actively practiced (at least 1,500 hours of clinical experience) in the past three years;
- (4) Applicant passed the national examination required by the Board for the specific license type;
- (5) Applicant does not have unprofessional conduct or pending disciplinary matters pending in the other jurisdiction

(Clarifies current law)

**Section 22:** Allows for a temporary license to be issued to an applicant licensed in another state if the applicant has not passed the required national examination for licensure by endorsement as provided in section 25. A temporary license is valid for 90 days and can be renewed once. (New law)

**Section 23:** Provides that a temporary licensee is subject to the jurisdiction of the Board and subject to this Act. (New law)

**Section 24:** Requires all licensees to provide the Board with updated information if there is a change of name, address, or employment. (Current law)

**Section 25:** Provides that licenses issued by the Board are valid until November 30<sup>th</sup> of odd numbered years. This makes the renewal of a license every other year versus the current annual renewal requirement. (Changes current law)

**Section 26:** Provides for a period of reinstatement for a license that is not renewed as prescribed in section 27. A licensee can reinstate a license that was not renewed by the required date within 30 days of the expiration without out penalty. A license is suspended until reinstated. (New law)

**Section 27:** Requires a licensee to complete at least 40 hours of continuing education biennially in a manner prescribed by the Board and allows continuing education to be prorated based on the date of initial licensure. (Clarifies current law)

**Section 28:** Provides for an inactive license status for licenses and for the process by which a licensee can inactivate a license and reactivate an inactive license. Current inactive licenses are provided with an expiration date of November 30, 2021, if not reactivated before that date. (Changes current law)

**Section 29:** Provides a process for an expired license to be reactivated within four years of expiration if the applicant:

- (1) Pays all applicable renewal fees;
- (2) Provides proof of continuing education for the period the license was expired;
- (3) Provides proof of passing a required national examination after the date the original license expired.

This section provides an option for reactivating an expired license that does not require acquiring new supervision hours, if the reactivation happens within a certain period. (New law)

**Section 30:** Provides exemption from the requirements of the Act. The list of exemptions is the list of current exemptions in law. (Current law)

**Section 31:** Provides that an action cannot arise against a counselor for failure to warn of or protect from harm unless a serious threat has been communicated against a reasonably identifiable victim. (Clarifies current law)

**Section 32:** Provides that a licensee, or employee of a licensee, cannot disclose information acquired in the provision of counseling services unless it fits one of these exemptions:

- (1) Mandated by state law or authorized under HIPPA;
- (2) With the written consent of the client or by someone authorized to make the request on behalf of the client;
- (3) The information is necessary to prevent or mitigate a serious or imminent threat if disclosure would reasonably prevent the threat;
- (4) The LPC or LPC-MH is a party defendant to a civil, criminal or disciplinary action;
- (5) The client is a defendant in a criminal proceeding and the use of privilege would violate the defendant's rights;
- (6) The client waived the privilege.

(Updates Current law)

**Section 33:** Provides that if counseling is provided to both parties of a marriage, the counselor may not testify in an alimony or divorce action. This section does not apply to custody actions. (Clarifies current law)

**Section 34:** Provides for the Board's complaint process. The section requires the Board to receive and investigate complaints and provides the Board with the option to investigate a complaint through a member, investigator or agent. The section provides that an investigating Board member can dismiss a complaint if there is not merit or that the complaint can be moved forward to a settlement agreement or hearing for resolution. (Clarifies current law)

**Section 35:** Allows the Board to inspect a counseling practice during normal business hours upon a complaint regarding the health and safety of patients or the public. (Current law)

**Section 36:** Provides that any information obtained by the Board during the review of a complaint is not subject to discovery in any legal proceeding until the complaint becomes a contested case. No person involved in the investigation of the complaint on behalf of the Board may testify as an expert witness or be compelled to testify in a civil matter concerning the complaint. (New law)

**Section 37:** Provides the grounds on which a license may be revoked, suspended or cancelled following the complaint process. (Current law)

**Section 38:** Provides that the Board may initiate a revocation, cancellation or suspension of a license or permit when the Board has information the licensee may be guilty of any misconduct provided for in this Act or gross incompetence or unprofessional conduct. (Current law)

**Section 39:** Provides the remedies the Board may use when addressing violations of this Act. (Clarifies current law)

**Section 40:** Provides for the summary suspension of a license pending a final adjudication if the Board finds a clear and immediate danger to the public if the licensee is allowed to continue practicing. The

section provides for a hearing within 20 days of the suspension and for an appeal of the Board's decision. (Current law)

**Section 41:** Provides that all disciplinary proceedings and appeals will be conducted in accordance with SDCL 1-26. (Current law)

**Section 42:** Allows the Board to reinstate a suspended, revoked or cancelled license or permit. (Current law)

**Section 43:** Requires the Board to report alleged violations of the Act that may be subject to criminal prosecution. (Current law)

**Section 44:** Provides that any person in violation of this Act may be enjoined from further violations at the suit of a state's attorney or any citizen of the state. A civil action is an alternate to criminal proceedings. (Current law)

**Section 45:** Requires that any person who practices counseling via electronic means (teletherapy) and provides the counseling to a patient located in the state is practicing counseling in South Dakota, regardless of where the person is located when providing the counseling. Counseling provided by electronic means (teletherapy) must comply with this Act. (Clarifies current law)

**Section 46:** Provides the Board with authority to set fees for:

- (1) Applications – no more than \$200
- (2) Renewals – no more than \$500
- (3) Duplicate licenses – no more than \$15
- (4) Inactive licenses – no more than \$100
- (5) Temporary licenses – no more than \$200
- (6) License verification – no more than \$25

These fee cap increases recognize the need to change the annual fees to biennial fees because of the timeline changes for renewal proposed by this Act. (Updates current law)

**Section 47:** Clarifies that any currently licensed LPC will continue to be licensed as an LPC under this Act. (New law)

**Section 48:** Clarifies that any currently licensed LPC-MH will continue to be licensed as an LPC-MH under this Act. (New law)

**Section 49:** Amends SDCL 34-52-2 to update the reference to telehealth practice for counselors to reflect the reorganization of the chapter.

**Section 50:** Repeals the current statutes concerning the Board of Examiners for Counselors and Marriage & Family Therapist (Board) to be replaced with sections 1 through 48. (Clarifies current law)

**For additional information, please contact Jennifer Stalley, Executive Secretary, Board of Examiners for Counselors and Marriage & Family Therapists at 605-280-5714**